

ARTIFICIAL BIAS IN A SAMPLE OF KANGAROO INCISORS FROM DEVIL'S LAIR, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

Discrepancies in the numbers of various kinds of teeth of the Western Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) among material excavated from Devil's Lair are demonstrated by comparing them to three other marsupial species. Some of these discrepancies can be related to biological characteristics of this species, but the greatest discrepancy, that between numbers of lower incisors and numbers of any other teeth, cannot. The most likely explanation is that the ancient human occupants of Devil's Lair were selectively removing lower incisors from the animals for use as implements or ornaments.

INTRODUCTION

Devil's Lair is a small limestone cave near Augusta, Western Australia. It contains a deep, mainly sandy floor deposit in which excavations have revealed the presence of many bone and stone artifacts and of large quantities of bone, much of which is fragmented. These and other archaeological features suggest that humans occupied the cave at least intermittently, for the period 27,000-6,000 years B.P. (layers 28-9; Balme, Merrilees & Porter, 1978) and it is probable that most of the bone material from that part of the deposit represents prey of human hunters.

Disproportions in the quantities of different skeletal parts of the Western Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) from Devil's Lair have been noted by Baynes, Merrilees & Porter (1976). I have re-examined and extended their data by considering all *Macropus fuliginosus* material recovered from excavations up to and including 1976 (Dortch & Merrilees, 1973; Baynes, Merrilees & Porter, 1976; Balme, Merrilees & Porter, 1978). Comparative

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